

Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force
Meeting Summary
February 26, 2002
Yellowstone Inn
Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

I. Introduction

Task Force Members Present:

John Bailey, Chair	Brant Oswald
David Haug, Vice Chair	Rod Siring
Roy Aserlind	Bob Wiltshire
Andy Dana	Jim Woodhull
Jerry O'Hair	Ellen Woodbury

Others Present:

Ken Britton, USFS Ex-Officio	Jeanne Souvigney	Chuck Dalby
Jeff Blend, DEQ Ex-Officio (proxy)	Karl Biastoch	Devri Roubidoux
Terri Marceron, USFS Ex-Officio	Andy Fritsch	Lurah Klaas
Laurence Siroky, DNRC Ex-Officio	Ed Harvey	Rodney Schwartz
Allan Steinle, Corps Ex-Officio	Lionel Dicharry	John Dwight Hines
Joel Tohtz, FWP Ex-Officio	Leanne Roulson	Rusty Collyer
Liz Galli-Noble, Coordinator	Burt Williams	Jim Robinson
Amy Miller, Administrative Secretary		
Duncan Patten, TAC Chair		

II. Prior Meeting Minutes

The December 13, 2001 and January 17, 2002 meeting minutes were approved as written.

III. Financial Updates

1. Grant Spending Report:

Amy Miller reported the following financial updates to the Task Force:

EXPENDED GRANTS			
Grant Name	Completed	Amount	Study Component
DNRC Watershed Planning Assistance Grant	6/30/99	2,100.00	Physical Features Inventory
DNRC HB223 Grant	7/30/99	10,000.00	Aerial photography
DNRC Riparian/Wetlands Educational Grant	6/30/00	960.99	<i>Hydrologic Response to the 1988 Fires</i> Workshop
DEQ 319 Grant (1 st)	9/30/00	40,000.00	Coordinator position
DNRC Watershed Planning Assistance Grant	1/31/01	10,000.00	Watershed Land Use Study
DEQ Start-Up Grant	6/26/01	49,138.00	Coordinator position, Admin Secretary, additional cross-sections, operating expenses.
DNRC HB223	10/1/01	6,500.00	Riparian Trend Analysis
BLM Funding	10/26/01	10,000.00	Wildlife Study
CURRENT GRANTS			
Grant Name	Amount	Spent	Remaining Balance
DNRC RDGP Grant (expires 12/31/02)	299,940.00	247,325.26	52,614.74
DEQ 319 Grant (2 nd) (expires 8/31/02)	58,000.00	50,352.22	7,647.78
DEQ 319 Grant (3 rd) (expires 6/20/03)	44,000.00	0	44,000.00

2. 319 Grant #4

Liz Galli-Noble reported that the DEQ approved full funding for the Task Force's fourth 319 Grant. The \$122,200 grant funding is for coordinator services, operations, and the final phase of the project.

3. EPA Grant

Liz reported that the EPA has approved funding for the Geomorphology study component in the amount of \$30,000. The Geomorphology study component is now fully funded.

4. Watershed Land Use Assessment printing and distribution costs

John Bailey reported that the Task Force had recently received five copies of the NRCS Watershed Land Use Assessment final report: *A Satellite-Based Land Cover Map for the Upper Yellowstone River Watershed, Montana and Wyoming* (December 2001). This would be the first of two products that the NRCS will submit to the Task Force. The second report will be completed by the end of this summer and will include soils data that are being finalized at present.

Having received this 25-page, full color publication brought to light several questions or possible concerns about the multitude of research documents that will be received by the Task Force in the near future. What will be the cost associated with printing and distribution of those documents? Who will receive copies of these documents? Can they be distributed via the website? Do they have to be printed in color? Should both preliminary (draft) and final reports be reproduced and distributed?

Liz explained that money has been budgeted in the new 319 Grant #4 specifically for final document printing and mailings [approximately \$25,000].

Further discussion followed:

Governmental agencies and/or research teams involved will likely present the Task Force with more than one copy of their final reports. However, Liz reminded the Task Force that their hard copy public mailing list alone is more than 200 people, and the email mailing list is 100 and growing.

Given that the website is now up and running, draft copies of reports could be posted on the website for easy public access and review. Final reports will definitely be posted there.

Andy Dana felt strongly that all information should be made available to the public. He encouraged Liz to contact Kinko's about their "on demand publishing" database.

CDs are also an option for the reproduction and distribution of final reports/data.

The Task Force will initially review draft final reports, due to the fact that researchers will be presenting their findings almost immediately after they complete their analysis. Draft final reports will contain data and analysis. For most research teams, final reports (contracted work products) will be completed by spring 2003, but for agencies such as the USGS, published final reports that can be released to the public may not be completed until 2004. That is not to say that the preliminary reports are not valid, they are valid for Task Force use; they simply must go through internal or peer review before official publication.

Liz was asked to survey the Task Force public mailing lists to see how many people will require printed copies of our study final reports, and how many would use other mediums to acquire the information. She will report back to the Task Force at a future meeting.

IV. TAC Business

Dr. Duncan Patten, TAC Chair, was asked to address "data concerns" that had been brought up by Task Force members at the November 13, 2001 meeting (see *Attachment A*). He spoke to the comments/questions addressed in *Attachment A*, as follows:

□ When we began the study, we thought that floods were the problem, but now we see that other things like wildfire and drought are impacting the watershed.

□ Why aren't we addressing these items in our study?

Duncan explained that addressing how the river system functions is the goal of this investigation. Nature is a set of changes to systems. The "Task Force years" have been unusual hydrologic years; that is, too wet or too dry. We have experienced natural and human-induced disturbances (1988 fires, drought, Fridley Fire) over the years, but in general, these events have not had a large affect on the system.

The TAC will present "what if" scenarios, which will model "extreme" and "normal" events/conditions and their possible outcomes.

□ How do we relate to these major events? How do these events relate to what the Task Force is doing?

We may see an affect from these recent events in fish population data, but there will be little affect on the geomorphology and hydrology of the system. The sediment from the Fridley Fire, for example, will be short term. For the riparian vegetation, a four-year drought will have little effect on existing plants as they are dependent on shallow groundwater, not stream flows; although recruitment of new plants during this drought period may be limited. Fifty-year cohorts (tree groupings) are normal; ideal conditions allowed them to establish and poor conditions creates the gaps between age classes.

□ We need to be looking at the full watershed in these studies, not just the corridor.

The Watershed Land Use Assessment has looked at what is in the full watershed. However, we are not looking at Yellowstone National Park or tributaries. The studies are looking at the watershed indirectly through response of the river to external and internal influences (for example, uplands, channel changes, etc.).

□ What do these events do to our data? Do they factor in? Does the Task Force need to expand the study? There is no need to expand the study; different condition scenarios will be looked at through modeling. The Forest Service does have data on the Fridley Fire that could be used in the study components of the Task Force (sedimentation and trout would be available). Chuck Dalby is using older years for comparisons in the Hydrology Study.

□ Is collecting data in a drought years problematic?

No. Actually, annual discharge (Corwin Springs gage) was slightly above normal in 1998 and 1999, while 2000 was slightly lower. 2001 appears to be lower.

The geomorphology studies are primarily studies of cross sections of the river, actually aided by low flows. Fish studies may show some effects of low flows but these can be related to existing data sets. Riparian studies, which emphasize recruitment and presence of existing cottonwood stands, should not be affected. Wildlife (bird) studies are tied directly to the presence of various riparian vegetation communities.

□ In addition

Duncan explained that when the Task Force is developing recommendations, they would hopefully embrace the idea of adaptive management. Nothing is set in stone; management practices may need to be adjusted with time. The Yellowstone River is a dynamic system and it is important for people to understand that not everything proposed will necessarily work. Predictive models will help provide guidance when addressing variables such as erosion, sediment, and channel migration.

V. Socio-Economic Assessment

Ed Harvey was asked to give a quick report on the February 25th public meeting. Ed said that the press coverage for the meeting was excellent, which helped bring some 45 individuals out. He also thought that the meeting was informative and had decent stakeholder representation. His team will now move into data collection and interviews. Once they have findings to share, he planned to do a follow-up, 2nd public meeting in late summer or early fall 2002. Their study will be completed in early October 2002.

Bob Wiltshire asked Ed Harvey if Task Force members or members of the public could still submit names of potential interviewees? Ed encouraged everyone to contact BBC with additional contact names, comments, or questions. He can be reached at:

Ed Harvey, BBC Research & Consulting
3773 Cherry Creek N. Drive, Suite 850
Denver CO 80209-3827
Phone: (303) 321-2547, or Email: Harvey@bbcresearch.com

VI. Outreach and Education Activities Updates

1. Website Subcommittee update and presentation

Liz Galli-Noble and Devri Roubidoux gave a brief presentation on the new Task Force website. Liz thanked Devri, her agency (DNRC), the Department of Administration, and the Website Subcommittee for assisting the Task Force with getting the site up and running. The website was designed to be very simple, fast to access, and will not have a lot of photos.

Task Force members and the public were asked to visit the website in the near future and contact Liz or Devri with suggestions on possible changes/improvements.

The website address is **upperryellowstonerivertaskforce.org**.

Bob Wiltshire thanked Liz and Devri for their hard work on the website.

2. Discussion: Montana Watershed Funding Resolution

Liz Galli-Noble presented a draft funding resolution developed by the Montana Watershed Coordinator Council (MWCC). The purpose of the resolution is to help develop a funding mechanism for Montana's watershed groups (specifically to fund their coordinators, administration, and operations). MWCC is requesting feedback from watershed groups (negative or positive) on the idea and wording of the resolution. Liz asked the Task Force members to contact her with comments. Given the Task Force timeline, it is unlikely that this funding will be used for Task Force activities; however, future efforts in the Upper Yellowstone Watershed may well need this type of funding assistance.

3. GYC Floodplain Study meeting, January 16, Livingston

John Bailey reported that on January 16, 2002, Scott Bosse, Greater Yellowstone Coalition Rivers Coordinator, invited him and Liz to give feedback on a GYC floodplain study being developed. John did not give comment on behalf of the Task Force.

4. Coordinator Activities: Floodplain Managers Workshop

Liz Galli-Noble attended the Floodplain Managers Workshop in Billings on January 24 & 25, 2002.

VII. Review of Task Force Ground Rules

John Bailey reported that the Task Force needed to approve new ground rules for their final 2002 –2003 term.

Bob Wiltshire moved to “extend the current Ground Rules through the end of the 2002-2003 term”.

David Haug seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

See *Attachment B* to review Task Force ground rules.

VIII. Additional Comments

Jerry O’Hair inquired about the USGS response letter that the Task Force had received concerning the Wildlife Study literature review (dated January 3, 2002). John Bailey and Duncan Patten responded by stating that the USGS-BRD has agreed to do what the Task Force had requested—an errata sheet disassociating the Task Force and TAC with the document will be added to any printed or electronic copies distributed in the future.

IX. Schedule Next Task Force Meeting

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for:

There will be **NO March 2002** meeting.

Tuesday, **April 16, 2002** at the Yellowstone Inn at 7:00 p.m.

X. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Attachment A. Task Force Data Concerns

John Bailey has asked Duncan Patten (TAC Chair) to address the issue of “data concerns” at the February 26, 2002 Task Force meeting.

Background

The issue came up at the December 13, 2001 Task Force meeting, when the Task Force was editing the *2001 Annual Report*. It was in response to a paragraph in the report that read, “Although flood events initially

brought the Task Force together in 1997, it is severe drought, low flows, and wild fires that have plagued the upper Yellowstone in 2001. These catastrophic events only reinforce the fact that long-term management decisions are needed for the Yellowstone River. We need to learn to better live with the river.”

This wording generated a lengthy discussion and Task Force members commented:

1. We are not addressing these issues in our study, so we need to delete the text from the report.
2. When we began the study we thought that floods were the problem, but now we see that other things like wildfire and drought are impacting the watershed.
3. We need to be looking at the full watershed in these studies, not just the corridor.
4. Why aren't we addressing these items in our study?
5. How do we relate to these major events?
6. How do these events relate to what the Task Force is doing?
7. What do these events do to our data? Do they factor in?

A decision was made to delete the entire *Looking Ahead* section from the annual report.

John Bailey thinks that this dialogue presents an opportunity for Task Force to better understand the data. He wants to address these comments. He wants these comments and questions like the following to be addressed:

What does our study data tell us, and not tell us?

Are there opportunities to expand our study at this point?

It is positive that people want to expand the scope of the study to include the entire watershed.

Attachment B. Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force Ground Rules **2002 – 2003 Term**

Participation

1. The discussions of the Upper Yellowstone River Task Force will include the perspectives of individuals and organizations whose interests may be affected by the recommendations or activities of the Task Force.

Voting Task Force members represent the following interests:

- Local businesses
- Property owners
- Ranchers
- Angling community

- Conservation groups
- Park County
- City of Livingston
- Park Conservation District

Ex-officio members of the Task Force represent the following government agencies:

- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- Montana Department of Transportation
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- National Park Service—Yellowstone National Park
- U.S. Forest Service—Livingston Ranger District
- U.S. Forest Service—Gardiner Ranger District

The Task Force will actively encourage the inclusion of a variety of perspectives in the following ways:

- Members will candidly identify and share their values and interests and will do so as soon as possible.
- Members will inform their constituency of the activities of the Task Force, seek the advice of their constituency and make every effort to speak for their constituency.
- The Task Force will invite individuals with perspective not represented by members to discuss their views with the Task Force.
- Task Force meetings will be open to the public. Individuals may request time on the Task Force agenda to discuss their concerns.
- Notice of meetings will be provided to the news media.
- A mailing list will be established and, upon request, individuals will receive notices of upcoming meetings and summaries of previous meetings.
- The Task Force will hold special meetings at different locations, when needed, to share information and gather ideas, comments, and concerns about Task Force proposals.
- The Task Force will periodically prepare a summary of its activities and distribute this summary to the news media and individuals on the mailing list.
- Task Force members agree to make every effort to attend every meeting. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, he or she may make arrangements for an alternate to attend the meeting, but should ensure that the alternate is fully informed of the issues under consideration and progress to date.

Decisions/Agreements

- The Task Force will seek consensus agreements regarding policy decisions and recommendations. Consensus is defined as acceptance of an agreement. Members may not agree with all aspects of an agreement; however, they do not disagree enough to warrant opposition to the agreement. When Task Force members accept an agreement, they commit themselves to implementing the agreement.
- Participants who disagree with a proposal are responsible for offering a constructive alternative that seeks to accommodate the interests of all other participants.
- Business or monetary decisions may be made by a voice vote of a majority (seven voting members) of the Task Force. The Chair may vote.

Communication with the Media

- The Chair will be the spokesperson for the Task Force in communications with the media.

2. Each participant is free to speak to the media regarding their own view on the work of the Task Force. No participant may characterize the views of other participants expressed in this process to the media or in other forums.
3. With the exception of notices of meetings or events, written statements distributed to the news media will be reviewed by the Task Force.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Task Force Chair, will serve as the contact person for the Task Force and liaison with government agencies. The Chair, with the consent of the Task Force, is responsible for conducting and calling meetings, clarifying voting issues, appointing subcommittees, and providing direction to the Task Force Coordinator.
2. The Vice-Chair will assume the duties of the Chair in his absence.
3. The Coordinator will: help the participants design an appropriate process; coordinate pre- and post-meeting logistics; prepare documents to maintain an objective record of the process, including meeting summaries and annual and final reports; distribute agendas and meeting summaries; encourage everyone to participate; and moderate discussions as needed. The Coordinator is nonpartisan and is not an advocate for any particular interest or outcome.

Technical Advisory Committee

The overall goal of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is to provide recommendations to the Task Force when requested based on the results of the scientific investigations. The TAC is given both broad direction and specific missions by the Task Force, and has the flexibility to determine how best to accomplish its job. The TAC has no authority to make policy decisions or recommendations on behalf of the Task Force; its role is to work as directed by the Task Force to ensure:

- The right questions are asked;
- The best approach and methods are used to answer questions;
- The data collected are objective, defensible, and trustworthy; and
- The answers provided are understandable and relevant.